

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: SOLO AND CHAMBER CLARINET WORKS
BY AMERICAN- BORN WOMEN
COMPOSERS: 1990-2005.

Lynda Baber Dembowski, Doctor of Musical
Arts

Directed By: Professor Mark Hill, School of Music

During the period of 1990-2005, American-born women composers have contributed significantly to the standard clarinet repertoire. Pioneering composers such as Joan Tower, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen have created staples for clarinet literature. Yet, there is very little scholarly research on women composers of clarinet music, most being concentrated on Joan Tower. Through my research, I have discovered over seventy-five works by more than fifty composers in the following genres: solo clarinet; clarinet and piano; clarinet and voice, with or without piano; and small chamber pieces for up to five players.

This performance dissertation project consists of three recitals featuring solo and chamber works by nine living women composers, and program notes containing pertinent biographical and compositional information. My intent is to increase recognition women composers, both prominent and lesser known, who are writing high-quality, accessible clarinet literature. Each woman selected is making a full or

partial living from the sales of her compositions, has received recognition through awards, commissions, grants, and frequent performances, and has composed works that are both performer and audience accessible.

Recital I: *Trios for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano Commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and Composed by American-Born Women Composers*. Composers: Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen.

Recital II: *Programmatic Clarinet Works by American-Born Women Composers*. Composers: Andrea Clearfield, Stella Sung, and Karen Amrhein.

Recital III: *Works for Solo Clarinet, Clarinet and Piano, and Clarinet Concerto Genres by American-Born Women Composers*. Composers: Persis Parshall Vehar, Jenni Brandon, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen.

SOLO AND CHAMBER CLARINET WORKS BY AMERICAN-BORN WOMEN
COMPOSERS: 1990-2005.

By

Lynda Baber Dembowski

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Compact Disc Table of Contents

Compact Disc Number 1

<i>DASH</i> (2001)	Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)
<i>Rain Waves</i> (1997)	Joan Tower (b. 1938)
<i>TRIO</i> for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano (2005)	Margaret Brouwer (b. 1940)
I. Joyful Moment	
II. Reverie	
III. Escaping	
<i>Slang</i> for Clarinet in Bb, Violin, and Piano	Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Compact Disc Number 2

<i>Time Cycle</i> for Clarinet and Soprano (2000)	Andrea Clearfield (b. 1960)
Early Fall Meditation	
Winter Vision	
Spring Dance	
Summer Breeze	
<i>Three Songs</i> for Soprano, Clarinet, and Piano (1997)	Stella Sung (b. 1959)
The Road Not Taken	
Neither Out Far Nor in Deep	
Lines Written in Dejection on the Eve of Great Success	
<i>Night Bloom</i> (2000)	Stella Sung (b. 1959)
<i>Event Horizon</i> (1999-2005)	Karen Amrhein (b. 1970)
Prelude	
Night	
Event Horizon	

Compact Disc Number 3

<i>Sound-Piece</i> for Clarinet and Piano (1998)	Persis Parshall Vehar (b. 1937)
Searching the Stars	
Inner Space	
Earth-Bound	
Chansons de la nature pour la Clarinette (2003)	Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)
Les Oiseaux	
Le Poisson	
Le Papillon	
Le Lapin et La Tortue	

CD Table of Contents Cont.

L'étoile
Dansez!
Le Serpent

Chamber Concerto for Clarinet with Percussion and Piano
Prelude
Vivace Ritmico

Margaret Brouwer
(b. 1940)

Licorice Stick for Clarinet and Piano

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

INTRODUCTION

I have embarked on my project to research clarinet music written by American-born women for three reasons. First of all, it is my hope to obtain more recognition for American women composers who are writing high-quality, accessible literature for the clarinet. To date, I have discovered over fifty composers and more than seventy-five compositions. Secondly, I aim to expand clarinet repertoire to include works by prominent and lesser-known women composers within several different genres. Finally, as an American-born woman, I want to contribute to the research of my musical heritage.

I have selected composers through a number of parameters. First of all, each qualifying woman is a living composer born in the United States during the 20th century. Each has written works for clarinet, published or unpublished, during the period of 1990 to 2005. Additionally, each woman has composed in one or more of the following genres: solo clarinet; clarinet and piano; clarinet and voice, with or without piano; and other small chamber pieces for a total of five players.

Additionally, composers and their respective pieces were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Each composer is making a living from the sales of her compositions, and/or through teaching composition at an accredited collegiate institution.
2. Each has gained recognition for her overall compositional output through awards; commissions from prestigious soloists, chamber groups and/or foundations; and/or frequent performance of her works.
3. Selected works are representative compositions within their respective genres, being musically challenging for the performer(s) and at the same time, accessible to audiences.

Recital I: May 6, 2007

Trios for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano Commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and Composed by American-Born Women Composers: 1990-2005

Program Notes for Works by Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen

For my first dissertation recital, I have selected four trios for clarinet, violin, and piano written by Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen. The Verdehr Trio, an internationally acclaimed American ensemble based at Michigan State University, commissioned each of the four works. Its members are Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr (clarinet), Walter Verdehr (violin), and Silvia Roederer (piano). Founded in 1972, this ensemble has dedicated more than thirty years to generating over 170 works for this genre. Before the group's inception, the repertoire for this genre was limited to seven works by twentieth century composers Bela Bartok, Alban Berg, Igor Stravinsky, Charles Ives, Aram Khatchaturian, Ernst Krenek, and Darius Milhaud. Their ongoing CD and video series, *The Making of a Medium*, promotes the works of highly regarded and lesser-known composers, including American women.

Jennifer Higdon (b.1962)

Biography

Jennifer Higdon was born on December 31, 1962 in Brooklyn, New York. Jennifer Higdon earned a Ph.D. and a M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in composition, a B.M. in flute performance from Bowling Green State University, and an Artist Diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Higdon's principal composition teachers have included George Crumb and Ned Rorem. She also studied flute with Judith Bentley and conducting with Robert Spano. In 2006-07, she served as the Karel Husa Visiting Professor at Ithaca College. She is also on the composition faculty of The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. *The Washington Post* has described her as "a savvy, sensitive composer with a keen ear, an innate sense of form and a generous dash of pure esprit."¹

Jennifer Higdon has had extensive commissions from many major orchestras, ensembles, and soloists including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Oregon Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Curtis Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo String Quartet, Ying

¹Jennifer Higdon, "Homepage," <<http://www.jenniferhigdon.com/biography.html>> (accessed 2 February 2007).

Quartet, Eighth Blackbird, the American Guild of Organists, and the Philadelphia Singers. Most recently, the 2006-07 season features commissions by violinist Jennifer Koh and pianist Lang Lang performing with the National Symphony Orchestra.²

Higdon has won many awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts & Letters, the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, Meet-the-Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts, and ASCAP. She has been a Composer-in-Residence for several music festivals, including the Vail Festival, Music From Angel Fire Festival, and the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. In 2004, Higdon was the first featured woman composer at the Tanglewood Contemporary Music Festival. Higdon was selected twice to receive grants from the Meet-the-Composer Foundation, making it possible for her to serve as Composer-in-Residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (2005-06 season) and the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra (2006-07 season). Ms. Higdon received a Grammy Award for the 2004 CD, *Higdon: Concerto for Orchestra/City Scape*, which was released by the Atlanta Symphony. *Blue Cathedral*, her one-movement orchestral work, is highly performed throughout the United States, having been programmed by more than 100 orchestras since its premiere in 2000.³

Clarinet Works

Celestial Hymns for clarinet, violin, viola, cello and piano (2000)

DASH for clarinet, violin, and piano (2001)

Light Refracted for clarinet, violin, viola, cello and piano (2002)

Soliloquy for clarinet and string quartet (2005), revised from a version for English horn and string orchestra (1998).

DASH

The composer describes the one-movement work:

DASH comes at the beginning of the 21st Century, where speed often seems to be our goal. This image fits well the instruments in this ensemble—clarinet, violin, and piano—because these are some of the fastest moving instruments in terms of their technical prowess. Each individual plays an equal part in the ensemble, contributing to the intensity and forward momentum, as the music dashes from beginning to end⁴

In a recent phone interview with Ms. Higdon, I inquired about her process of composing *DASH* and its thematic content. She began writing *DASH* as a reaction to the tragic events that occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001. She had completed three-fourths of her *Concerto for Orchestra*, a major commission from the Philadelphia Orchestra, and ceased composing because the events of that day affected her so deeply that she feared it might have a serious impact on this commission. As she described to

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jennifer Higdon, Liner notes from *The Making of a Medium Vol. 16: International Connections*: performed by the Verdehr Trio, Crystal Records CD946, 2006. Compact disc.

me, “It was as if someone had dumped dark-colored paint into my oranges and yellows.”⁵ Higdon had previously been approached by the Verdehr Trio to write a short work for the ensemble, and the music she chose to write on that day as a cathartic outlet became *DASH*. She describes the overall sense of the work as having a “scared, edgy quality.”⁶ The Verdehr Trio premiered *DASH* in Buenos Aires on September 13, 2002 during their tour of South America.⁷

Joan Tower (b.1938)

Biography

Composer, pianist and conductor Joan Tower was born on September 6, 1938 in New Rochelle, New York. Much of her youth was spent in South America, as she and parents lived in Bolivia for nine years.⁸ Tower took an interest in the rhythms and use of percussion in South American music. At eighteen, she returned to the United States to pursue her musical studies at Bennington College. She additionally received multiple degrees from Columbia University (MA 1965, DMA 1978). In 1969, she founded the award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players, and performed as their pianist for 15 years. The ensemble won the prestigious Naumburg Award in 1973. Since 1972, Joan Tower has been a member of the music faculty at Bard College,⁹ and is currently the Asher Edelman Professor of Music. She is composer-in-residence with the Orchestra of St Luke’s (10 years), the Deer Valley Festival in Utah (9 years), and the Yale/Norfolk Chamber Music Festival (8 years). She has also served as composer-in-residence with the St. Louis and Louisville Symphonies.¹⁰

The New Yorker magazine has hailed Joan Tower as, “one of the most successful woman composers of all time.”¹¹ Among her numerous accolades is the 1990 Grawemeyer Award in Composition, with a cash prize of \$150,000, which she received for her orchestral work *Silver Ladders* (1986). Tower’s *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman* (1986), was performed by more than two hundred ensembles in a ten-year period. Originally composed as a tribute to Aaron Copland, the work spawned four additional fanfares by the same title. In 1998, she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In the same year, Tower also received Delaware Symphony’s Alfred I. DuPont Award for Distinguished American Composer.¹² The Academy of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University honored her in the fall of 2004.

⁵Jennifer Higdon, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 17 April 2007.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD 29 April 2007.

⁸“Ford Made in America: Interview with Joan Tower,” *Ford Made in America*, <<http://www.fordmadeinamerica.org/composer.shtml>> (accessed 20 January 2007).

⁹Sharon Prado Howard, “Joan Tower,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (accessed 18 January 2007).

¹⁰Joan Tower, “Homepage,”

<http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2419&State_2872=2&ComposerId_2872=1605> (accessed 5 November 2006).

¹¹Joan Tower, “Homepage.”

¹²Karin Pendle, ed. *Women and Music: A History*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 325.

Joan Tower was the first composer selected for the “Ford Made in America”¹³ commissioning program, a joint collaboration of the American Symphony Orchestra League and Meet The Composer with contributions from the Ford Motor Company Fund. In October 2005, the Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra presented the world premiere of Tower’s 15-minute orchestral piece, *Made in America*. Based on melodic motives from *America the Beautiful*, the work enjoyed performances by 65 orchestras from the collective 50 states in the Union during the 2005-06 season. From this groundbreaking project involving smaller-budget orchestras as commissioning agents of a new work by a major composer, Tower was deemed the most performed living composer during the 2005-06 orchestral season.¹⁴

Clarinet Works

Wings for solo clarinet is one of the most performed works from Joan Tower’s compositional oeuvre. It was written for Laura Flax, who premiered the piece in New York City’s Merkin Hall on December 14, 1981.¹⁵ She composed *Fantasy... Harbor Lights* for clarinet and piano in 1983. Her *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* was written in 1988 for David Shifrin, an internationally respected clarinet artist and teacher at Yale University. In 1995, Tower wrote *Turning Points* for clarinet and string quartet for Shifrin and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. *Rain Waves*, composed in 1997 for clarinet, violin, and piano, is her most recent work for clarinet.¹⁶

Rain Waves

Rain Waves was commissioned by Michigan State University for the Verdehr Trio in 1997. Tower dedicated the work to the ensemble “for their unfailing support of the music of our time, and for their devoted efforts to give a composer’s new work a ‘life’ through their worldwide performance tours and recordings.”¹⁷ It was premiered on December 14, 1997 at the Frick Collection in New York City. Tower chose the title of this work to represent exploration of the motion of a wave form. The work begins with a “pointillistic rain-like pattern,”¹⁸ increasing in intensity while floating upward and downward. In the more flowing sections, she notes that “there is a sense of wind pushing the notes into longer and wider arched patterns- perhaps like the undulating sheets of rain created in a light tropical rainfall.”¹⁹

During a 2006 interview with violinist Walter Verdehr at Converse College, South Carolina, Joan Tower spoke about her initial reactions to the premiere of *Rain Waves*, and

¹³*Ford Made in America*.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵ “From the Archives: Joan Tower,” *DRAM*, 16 November 2006, <http://dram.nyu.edu/mt/dram_featured/archives/2006/11/_from_the_archi.html> (accessed 25 April 2007).

¹⁶Joan Tower, “Homepage.”

¹⁷Joan Tower, *Rain Waves*, Program Note (New York, NY: Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI), 1997).

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

the extensive revisions she made through interactions with the ensemble. She exclaimed, “I’d never made so many revisions—in a piece—ever—deep cuts.”²⁰ She admits that she is never happy with premieres of her works, “It hurts— [it’s] very vulnerable.”²¹ Tower spoke about the clarinetist, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, being upset at her for cutting out a large lyrical passage in the middle of the piece. Tower reasoned that she wanted the piece to be its absolute best, “It’s a piece that you want it to live—you want it to be out there in the world, to be healthy and strong—like a kid.”²² The Verdehr Trio has performed *Rain Waves* numerous times worldwide, and recorded for their *Making of a Medium* compact disc and video series. On January 22, 2006, the ensemble programmed the work, along with the premiere of Margaret Brouwer’s *Trio*, on a concert celebrating the Sesquicentennial of Michigan State University.²³

Margaret Brouwer (b. 1940)

Biography

Margaret Brouwer was born in 1940 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College-Conservatory, a Master of Music degree from Michigan State University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Indiana University. Among her compositions teachers are Donald Erb, Harvey Solberger, Frederick Fox and George Crumb. She has had residencies at the Wellesley Composers Conference, MacDowell Colony (Norton Stevens Fellow), the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Charles Ives Center for American Music.²⁴

Brouwer is head of the composition department and holder of the Vincent K. and Edith H. Smith Chair in Composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She has received numerous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Ford Foundation, Knight Foundation, Meet the Composer, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Indiana Arts Commission. Brouwer received an award from the Academy of Arts and Letters in 2006, and was named a Guggenheim Fellow in 2004, for her “unusually impressive achievement in the past and exceptional promise for future accomplishment.”²⁵

Many of the country’s most distinguished ensembles have programmed her works including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Cassatt and Cavani String Quartets, and the Seattle Symphony. In Washington, D.C. her music has been performed before audiences at the Kennedy Center, the Corcoran Gallery, and the Philips Collection.²⁶

²⁰Joan Tower, interview by Walter Verdehr, *The Verdehr Trio: Making of a Medium Video Series, Part II* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State Libraries, 2006). Digital Video Disc.

²¹Joan Tower, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 21 April 2007.

²²Tower, *Making of a Medium* video.

²³Tower, phone interview.

²⁴Margaret Brouwer, “Composition Department,” *Cleveland Institute of Music*, <<http://www.cim.edu/coIFaculty.php?div=11>> (accessed 20 January 2007).

²⁵Margaret Brouwer, “Homepage,” <<http://www.brouwermusic.com>> (accessed 5 November 2006).

²⁶*Ibid.*

Clarinet Works

Chamber Concerto for Solo Clarinet, Percussion, and Piano (1993)

Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (1994) –revised version of *Chamber Concerto*

"No Rotary Phone" for Solo Clarinet (1995)- adapted from flute *solo*, *Diary of an Alien*

Prelude and Vivace for Solo Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra (1996)- chamber version of

Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra

Lament for Violin, Clarinet, Bassoon (Cello), and Percussion (2002)

Quintet for Clarinet in A and String Quartet (2005)

Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano (2005)

Trio

The Verdehr *Trio* and Michigan State University jointly commissioned *Trio* for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano, and its premiere was given at one of three concerts on January 22, 2006 for the university's Sesquicentennial celebration. The ensemble has performed the work numerous times, including a concert at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. on February 2, 2006 and a recital at the International Clarinet Association ClarFest in Atlanta in August 2006.²⁷

Brouwer organized form within the movements and used a formula for the arrangement of pitches, taking inspiration from James Gleick's book, *Chaos*. On her website, she quotes Gleick:

"The attracting pull of four points . . . creates basins of attractions . . . But each particle does not move independently - its motion depends very much on the motion of its neighbors - and in a smooth flow, the degrees of freedom can be few."²⁸

She titled each movement to represent an emotion or state of being to be felt in the music. The "bright and glowing sounds"²⁹ of the first movement are contrasted in the second movement with a serene but sad quality of stasis. The third movement embodies tension and anxiety. Brouwer immediately set nervous interplay among the three voices, with the clarinet's lugubrious chromatic figures, the brittle warbles from the violin, and brilliant accented figures in the piano. These contrasting ideas are then passed around between the players. The strong rhythmic middle section and its meter changes keep the energy of the movement propelled forward.³⁰

²⁷Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 29 April 2007.

²⁸Brouwer, "Homepage."

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Margaret Brouwer, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 15 March 2007.

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Biography

Elizabeth Brown Larsen was born on December 24, 1950 in Wilmington, Delaware. She holds multiple degrees from the University of Minnesota, including a Ph.D. in Music Composition that she earned in 1978. Among her principal teachers are Dominick Argento, Paul Fetler, and Eric Stokes.³¹ Larsen co-founded with composer Stephen Paulus the Minnesota Composers Forum in 1973. This organization, known nationally as the American Composers Forum, provides assistance to aspiring composers through offering fellowships, producing concerts, and advising in business matters.³² In 1983, she became the first woman to hold the position of Composer-in Residence with a major orchestra. She held this position with the Minnesota Orchestra for four years, and has had similar residencies with the Colorado Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Cincinnati Conservatory, and the Philadelphia School of the Arts. Larsen has been an advisor to the American Symphony Orchestra League Board, American Society of Composers, ASCAP, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Since the mid-1980s, she has composed strictly by commissions.³³

Among her accolades is the 1994 Grammy Award for the compact disc, *The Art of Arleen Auger*, on which her song cycle *Sonnets from the Portuguese* was featured. Larsen has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Opera Institute, and was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2000. A strong advocate for education, Larsen held the 2003-2004 Harissios Papamarkou Chair of Education and Technology at the John W. Kluge Foundation of the Library of Congress. She was also a recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.³⁴

Libby Larsen is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers today. From her catalogue of over 200 compositions, she has contributed to the orchestra, choral, opera, theatre, dance, chamber, and solo repertoires. Her style of composition is an amalgamation of two aspects, her classical training and the influences from American culture. Larsen points out that her highly rhythmic style of writing comes from the various styles of music she was exposed to as a child listening to her mother's record collection. She soaked in the sounds of big band, boogie, and ragtime, as well as delta and Chicago blues.³⁵ She is also fascinated with the inflections and rhythms in the language of American culture, notably slang. During her interview with the Verdehr Trio's violinist Walter Verdehr for the *Making of a Medium, Volume 2* video, Larsen

³¹Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel, eds. *The Norton/ Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, (New York: The McMillan Press Limited, 1995), 266-67.

³²Neil Butterworth, *Dictionary of American Classical Composers*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 266.

³³Bums, Kristine H., ed. *Women and Music in America Since 1900*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 365-66.

³⁴Libby Larsen, "Homepage," <<http://www.libbyslarsen.com>> (accessed 5 November 2006).

³⁵Libby Larsen, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 18 April 2005.

said, “Rhythm and melody really come does come from language...American language is a rather new language...post-World War II... from coast to coast.”³⁶ She is interested in its rhythm, body language, and narrow pitch band. Larsen strives to bring together her formal training and cultural influences to create sounds that capture the essence of the American spirit.³⁷

Clarinet Works

Larsen is one of the most prolific American-born women composers of clarinet music, having written eleven works for clarinet:

Three Pieces for Treble Wind and Guitar (1974)

Corker for clarinet and percussion (1977)

Song Without Words for clarinet and piano (1986)

Black Birds, Red Hills for clarinet, viola, piano, optional slides (1987), revised 1996

Dancing Solo for solo clarinet (1994)

Slang for Clarinet in Bb, Violin, and Piano (1993-4)

Blue Third Pieces for flute or clarinet and guitar (1996)

Bally Deux for 2 clarinets and string quartet (2001)

Barn Dances for flute, clarinet, and piano (2001)

Licorice Stick for clarinet and piano (2002)

Yellow Jersey for 2 clarinets (2004).

Slang

Slang for clarinet, violin, and piano was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and Michigan State University and received its premiere in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on November 3, 1993.³⁸ Larsen describes her work:

Slang is a one-movement work in three sections. Its title refers to the use of both jazz and boogie slang and twentieth century “new music” slang throughout the composition. I got the idea for *Slang* while I was working on a ballet for the Ohio Ballet. I was thinking about our American culture with its vast array of musical languages. I’m fascinated by the idea that just as we have developed slang in our speaking language, we have also developed a lexicon of musical slang. This composition explores the idea, asking the performers to freely change performance styles as the musical language dictates.³⁹

During her interview with Walter Verdehr for the recording of *Making of a Medium*, she talked at length about the compositional struggles she encountered while writing the piece. Larsen actually began work on *Slang* as early as 1986, but delayed its completion

³⁶Libby Larsen, interview by Walter Verdehr, *The Verdehr Trio: Making of a Medium Video Series, Part II*, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State Libraries, 2006). Digital Video Disc.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, interview by phone.

³⁹Libby Larsen, *Slang* for Clarinet in Bb, Violin, and Piano, Program Note (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

for more than three years due to style changes emerging in her work. She was unhappy that the music came too easy for her and that the overall product was unsatisfying. Through several phone conversations with Verdehr, Larsen communicated her frustration and proposed to return the commissioning fee. Verdehr refused, and insisted that they would wait for her to find her voice and write the work.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Larsen, *Making of a Medium* video.

Dissertation Recital II: November 11, 2007

Programmatic Clarinet Works by American-Born Women Composers: 1990-2005

Program Notes for Works by Andrea Clearfield, Stella Sung, and Karen Amrhein

For my second dissertation recital, I have selected four chamber works for clarinet that contain programmatic elements. All four composers drew inspiration from literature or art to create their musical compositions. The first half of the recital features two pieces for clarinet and soprano, the latter with piano, by Andrea Clearfield and Stella Sung. Each has drawn texts from the poetry of Manfred Fischbeck and Robert Frost respectively. The second half of the recital will feature a quartet for clarinet and strings by Stella Sung and a quintet for clarinet and mixed instruments by Karen Amrhein. Sung's work is based on Memphis Wood's 1975 mixed media art, entitled *Night Bloom*. Amrhein's quintet, *Event Horizon* draws reference to William J. Kaufmann's 1979 novel *Black Holes and Warped Space Time*. The third movement, also titled *Event Horizon*, is a musical depiction of a black hole. Another common bond among these composers, which is purely coincidental, is that all of them are based on the east coast. Andrea Clearfield is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and continues to teach and compose there. Karen Amrhein is based in Baltimore, Maryland, while Stella Sung lives and works in Jacksonville, Florida.

Andrea Clearfield

Biography

Andrea Clearfield was born in 1960. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Muhlenberg College. She has a Master of Music degree in piano performance from The University of the Arts, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from Temple University. She studied piano with Margaret Garwood and Susan Starr, composition with Maurice Wright, and orchestration with Jonathan Kramer. Since 1986, she has served on the faculty at The University of the Arts. An active pianist, Dr. Clearfield is a member of the Relâche Ensemble for Contemporary Music and has performed numerous ensembles including The Court of the Dalai Lama. A strong proponent for community in music, she is the founder of the SALON concert series in Philadelphia. In its 21st year, the series offers an eclectic mix of classical, contemporary, jazz, electronic, and world music.⁴¹

Dr. Clearfield's compositions encompass several genres, including solo instrumental and vocal works, as well as pieces for chamber ensembles, chorus, orchestra and dance. Her

⁴¹ Andrea Clearfield, "Homepage," Andrea Clearfield, <http://www.internationalopus.com/Andrea_Clearfield/bio.html> (accessed 25 September 2007).

works have been performed at the Kimmel Center, The Curtis Institute of Music, Merkin Hall, and at various festivals such as Aspen, Sarasota, Norfolk, Banff, and Bowling Green Music Festivals. Among many international performances, her compositions have been heard at the International Horn Symposium in Beijing, Festival of Women Composers International, International Tanzwochen in Dresden, Conservatoire de Musique in Luxembourg, and Teatro Maddalene in Padona, Italy.⁴²

Dr. Clearfield has been the recipient of numerous grants, awards, and commissions, from organizations such as ASCAP, Meet the Composer, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Independence Foundation, the American Music Center, the American Composers Forum, the Leeway Foundation and the Philadelphia Community Education Center. She has received multiple awards from the International Alliance for Women in Music, including the Theodore Front Prize for her cantata *The Long Bright*, and the Nancy Van De Vate Prize for her cantata *On the Pulse of Morning*. She was the winner of the 2002 Delaware New Music Composition Competition, and the 2000 Delaware and Pennsylvania Commissioning Competitions. Clearfield was also awarded first prize in the 2000 American Jewish Music Festival in Los Angeles, and received a 1998 award from the American Composers Forum for excellence in music. She has recorded with Crystal Records, Norway's 2L label, and her work has been broadcasted on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."⁴³

Time Cycle

Time Cycle was a collaborative commissioning project sponsored by the Music Teachers National Association, the Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association, and the Delaware State Music Teachers Association. Soprano Shannon Coulter and clarinetist Joshua Kovach premiered the work at both the Pennsylvania and Delaware state conventions in November 2000. Andrea Clearfield used texts by Philadelphia poet, choreographer, and Artistic Director of Motion Dance Company Manfred Fischbeck, as the basis for this four-movement work. Having worked frequently with Fischbeck and used much of his poetry, she chose texts that evoke four seasons and various aspects of time. Clearfield views Fischbeck's poetry as "mystical and Haiku-like,"⁴⁴ In "Early Fall Meditation", meandering musical lines conjure a sense of restlessness and longing. In "Winter Vision", the clarinet sets a delicate texture, evoking and landscape of falling snow, though a slow passacaglia of chalumeau register tremolos. "Spring Dance" is energized with changing rhythms and perpetual forward motion in the form of a scherzo. The final movement, "Summer Breeze", alternates between rubato movement and stasis, emphasizing Fischbeck's words, "The presence of time – the time of presence."⁴⁵

Stella Sung

Biography

Stella Sung was born in Gainesville, Florida in 1959. She began piano studies when she was 8. Sung attended the University of Michigan, where she received a Bachelor of

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Andrea Clearfield, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 8 November 2007.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Music degree in piano performance. Her principal teachers were Theodore Lettvin and Louis Nagel. Sung also completed a Master of Fine Arts degree in composition from the University of Florida at Gainesville, studying with John D. White, and Edward Troupin. Sung pursued further studies in piano at the University of Texas at Austin. She studied piano with David Renner and composition with Donald Grantham and Eugene Kurtz. In her second year of doctoral studies, she was appointed to the faculty at the University of Central Florida, and completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance shortly after in 1991. Dr. Sung is a Full Professor at UCF, and transferred last spring from the School of Music to the School of Film and Digital Media.⁴⁶ She has been recognized as a “Distinguished Alumna” and an “Alumna of Outstanding Achievement” from the University of Central Florida, and was recently the recipient of the “Distinguished Achievement Award” from UCF.⁴⁷

Dr. Sung has received accolades and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, “Meet the Composer”, ASCAP, the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Southern Arts Federation, the German Ministry of Culture, the MacDowell Colony, the National Federation of Music Clubs, the National Flute Association, the International Clarinet Association, the Florida State Music Teachers Association, the Arts Services Council of Orlando, Florida, and many other music organizations. She is a two-time recipient of a Florida Individual Artist’s Fellowship, sponsored by the Division of Cultural Affairs for the State of Florida. In 2005, Dr. Sung received a Florida Artist’s Enhancement award. She is also the recipient of the 2007 Phi Kappa Phi National Artist’s Award. Aaron Hosé’s documentary film about Sung’s *Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra* was a two-time winner of the Telly Award in 2007. Sung’s compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia. Her works have been premiered at Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, the Schauspielhaus in Berlin, Germany, the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C and Merkin Hall in New York City. Dr. Sung’s compositions have been heard on many radio stations including WNYC-New York, WGBH-Boston, WKUT-Austin, Texas, the Bayerisch Rundfunk in Munich, Germany, the Swedish National Radio in Stockholm, and Radio Vaticana in Rome, Italy. Commissions have included works for cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the German Ministry of Culture in Rhineland-Pfalz, The New Renaissance Chamber Artists of New York City, the Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra in Orlando, the Dayton Symphony Orchestra, PRISM Saxophone Quartet, the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, and many more.⁴⁸

Dr. Sung’s current projects include an upcoming joint commission for the Akron (OH) Symphony Orchestra and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. With additional participation from the Akron Museum of Art and the Orlando Museum of Art, this composition/ multi-media presentation is based on the work of Norman Rockwell. It will be presented with the Norman Rockwell exhibits featured at both museums during the 2007-2008 season. Sung is also uniting with Hard Rock entertainment company to develop music for a section of their new theme park, Hard Rock Park in Myrtle Beach,

⁴⁶Stella Sung, “Electronic Citations,” (Personal e-mail) 7 January 2007.

⁴⁷ Stella Sung, “Homepage,” <<http://music.ucf.edu/sung/biography.php>> (accessed 10 January 2007).

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

S.C. which is scheduled to open in 2008. Sung's major music publishers are the Southern Music Company, Theodore Presser Music Publishers, and Editions Henry Lemoine of France. Her can be heard on Cambria Master Recordings, Eroica Recordings, Sinfonica (Italy), and KOCH Classical Recordings.⁴⁹

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Three Songs

Three Songs for soprano, clarinet, and piano was written during Sung's residency at the McDowell Colony in New Hampshire in the fall of 1997. Sung describes the experience as "absolutely wonderful"⁵⁰, being totally immersed in her work in a quiet private studio in the middle of the fall woods. It seems quite appropriate that she first chose Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken" as her starting point of this composition. She completed the first movement during her first week of the month-long residency. She found two additional poems of Frost's while scanning through the colony's library, "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep" and "Lines Written in Dejection on the Eve of Great Success," the first of which she wrote the music all in one day. "Neither" musically depicts the rolling, crashing motion of the sea through the soprano's jaunty musical lines and the undulating motions of the piano and clarinet accompaniment. The composition was written for the Kansas ensemble Lyric Arts Trio, with soprano Suzanne Hillis Ackin, clarinetist Elena Lence Talley, pianist Leah Hokanson. It was premiered on June 1, 1998, in the Park College Chapel, Kansas. Dr. Sung has also frequently performed the work for the piano with various performers.⁵¹

Night Bloom

Stella Sung was one of three Florida composers commissioned by the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art to write new works based upon pieces in the museum's collection. She was assigned to the Memphis Woods work *Night Bloom*, a mixed materials work that contains textiles and other fabrics. Sung notes, "The idea that I was struck by was the cyclical and organic feel of the work. *Night Bloom* [for clarinet and string trio] is through-composed, and I tried to capture the energy and 'bloom' of that which occurs naturally in nature."⁵² Members of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra performed the work at the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art in 2000.

Karen Amrhein

Biography

Karen Amrhein was born in Detroit in 1970. She began composing at the age of 15, around the time her family moved to California. Although she had musical knowledge through piano and clarinet lessons, Amrhein did not study composition until college. While completing her bachelor's degree in Medieval History at the University of California at San Diego, she minored in composition. She studied with Brian Ferneyhough, Joji Yusa, and Jon Fonville; all were part of the "New Complexity

⁵⁰Stella Sung, "Electronic Citations," (Personal e-mail) 8 November 2007.

⁵¹Stella Sung, "Homepage: Compositions/CDs," <<http://music.ucf.edu/sung/compositions.php>> (accessed 10 January 2007).

⁵²Stella Sung, "Electronic Citations."

Movement” in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Amrhein considered her training invaluable, as she felt that these teachers supported her musical direction and did not implement conformity of their styles.⁵³

After completing her degree at UC San Diego, Karen Amrhein studied composition with Morris Cottrell and Ron Caltabiano at the Peabody Conservatory, as well as minored in clarinet. While much of the compositional emphasis at Peabody was on atonal music, she tended to write more conservatively.⁵⁴

Karen Amrhein is an award-winning member of ASCAP, a recipient of a 2005 Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award⁵⁵ and has twice been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Her music has been performed by the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Susquehanna Symphony, the Hewlett-Packard Symphony, the Peabody Wind Ensemble, and the Mariner String Quartet. In 2005, Amrhein received a commission from the Susquehanna Symphony to write *Christmas Mirror* for Narrator and Orchestra.⁵⁶

William Zagorski reviewed Amrhein’s CD *Still Life* produced in MMC Recordings in 2003. Speaking specifically about her work *Event Horizon*, he praised the composer’s compositional gift:

Amrhein is tonally oriented, lyrical, and composes with an insightful sense of instrumental possibility. She is also a fine contrapuntalist who is equally adept at thinking both vertically and horizontally. Her lines are enlivened by quirky rhythms, and the harmonies that their convergences generate at key points are never less than pleasingly surprising.⁵⁷

Event Horizon

Event Horizon was commissioned by Jason Love and the New Horizons Chamber Ensemble, a group based in the Baltimore-Washington area. The one movement work was completed in 1999. Amrhein chose to compose for the mixed quintet instrumentation after hearing a performance of Carlos Sanchez Gutierrez’s chamber work *Luciérnagas* during a composer’s workshop at Carnegie Hall in the same year.⁵⁸ Written for Eighth Blackbird Ensemble, *Luciérnagas* was scored for clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion. Amrhein liked the collage of timbres created by the instruments and decided to write for this specific combination.⁵⁹ In 2003, Amrhein received the opportunity through Tom McKinley at MMC Recordings to write a concerto that Richard Stoltzman would record. She reworked *Event Horizon* for chamber orchestra and added two additional movements, “Prelude” and “Night.” In 2005, she re-orchestrated those two

⁵³Karen Amrhein, Personal interview, Baltimore, MD, 15 September 2007.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵Maryland State Arts Council, “Maryland State Arts Council FY 2005 Individual Artist Award Recipients,” <http://www.msac.org/docs_uploaded/iaa05awardprlist.htm> (accessed 20 February 2007).

⁵⁶Karen Amrhein, “Homepage,” <<http://www.karenamrhein.com/contact.htm>> (21 January 2007).

⁵⁷William Zagorski, “Karen Amrhein: Still Life,” *Fanfare Magazine* 27, no. 9 (Jan/Feb 2006), 4748.

⁵⁸Amrhein interview.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

movements for the original quintet instrumentation, and has enjoyed several performances of both ensemble versions. Stoltzman recorded with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra on Amrhein's *Still Life* CD for the MMC Recording label.⁶⁰

Recital III: February 26, 2008

Works for Solo Clarinet, Clarinet and Piano, and Clarinet Concerto Genres by American-Born Women Composers: 1990-2005.

Program Notes for Works by Persis Parshall Vehar, Jenni Brandon, Margaret Brouwer, and Libby Larsen

This recital features clarinet works from the unaccompanied solo and solo with piano genres, as well as the concerto medium. Persis Parshall Vehar, Composer in Residence at Canisius College, has generated three major compositions for clarinet in the last ten years through her collaborations with Dr. Crystal Reinoso, Professor at the Buffalo State College, and John Fullam, Principal Clarinetist with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Her work, *Sound-Piece for Clarinet and Piano*, a three-movement programmatic work using extended technique will be performed. Jenni Brandon, composer, conductor, and vocalist from Long Beach, California, is the youngest featured composer at age 30. Her unaccompanied piece, *Chansons de la Nature pour la Clarinette* is a lyrical musical journey deriving inspiration from Aesop's fables.

Guggenheim Award-winning composer Margaret Brouwer and Grammy Award-winner Libby Larsen are both featured once again in these dissertation performances. Margaret Brouwer's *Chamber Concerto* is written for clarinet, piano, and percussion. While being a chamber composition where all instruments have vital roles and at times equal weight, the clarinet dominates with gymnastic feats of frequent glissandi, flutter-tongue, and other extended techniques while sweeping the entire instrument's range. In Libby Larson's *Licorice Stick*, the composer melds sounds from the big band and boogies eras in her work for clarinet and piano. Her intention in this piece is to create sounds that are truly American, through virtuosic clarinet lines that are reminiscent of Benny Goodman and piano passages taken from ragtime and boogie.

Persis Parshall Vehar (b. 1937)

Biography

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

Persis Parshall Vehar was born in 1937 in New Salem, New York. She holds a Bachelor of Music Theory degree from Ithaca College, and a Master of Music degree in piano performance from the University of Michigan. Her primary composition teachers were Warren Benson, Ross Lee Finney, Roberto Gerhard and Ned Rorem. She has participated in advanced composition workshops with Milton Babbitt, John Cage, Jacob Druckman, Leon Kirchner and Roger Sessions. She is currently Composer-in-Residence at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY.⁶¹

Ms. Vehar has composed over 130 works in a variety of genres, including solo vocal, chamber, choral, and opera compositions, as well as many instrumental solo, chamber, and orchestral works. Her four operas have been performed internationally. Her compositions have been heard at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City, London's Royal Festival Hall, the Graz Music Festival in Graz, Austria, McMaster and Brock Universities in Canada, Piccolo Spoleto Festival of Charleston, South Carolina and the Rockefeller Kennedy Center Voice Competition for Excellence in American Music in New York City.⁶²

Ms. Vehar has received many awards, grants, and accolades for her compositions. She is a six-time recipient of the Meet the Composer Grant, and she has received twenty-one annual ASCAP Awards consecutively from 1984 to 2005. In 1997, Vehar received the Margaret Fairbank Jory Award⁶³ from the American Music Center for her composition, *Winter Mountain*, which was written for the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam Wind Ensemble.⁶⁴ In 2000, received the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Buffalo and Erie County Arts Council Special Opportunity awards. She has served on the Composition Panel for the New York Foundation for the Arts, and is currently a consultant to the New York State Council on the Arts. She is listed in the International Who's Who in Music, and included in the International Museum's Collection of Distinguished Musicians in London and the Bibliothèque Internationale de Musique Contemporaine in Paris.⁶⁵

Persis Vehar's long-time collaboration with John Fullam, Principal Clarinetist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra generated *City of Light Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* in 2006. Fullam and the Buffalo Philharmonic premiered the work on April 27, 2007 under the baton of Artistic Director JoAnn Falletta. The full-length concerto is inspired by the physical and commercial development of the city of Buffalo occurring at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, exploring its progression from gas-lamps to electricity as a means to illuminate the city. The concerto's premiere

⁶¹ Persis Vehar, "Biography," *Northfield Press*, <<http://www.northfieldpress.com/Biography.htm>> (accessed 6 June 2007).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Persis Vehar, "Fine Arts Faculty," *Canisius College*, <<http://www.canisius.edu/finearts/faculty.asp#music>> (accessed 20 January 2008).

⁶⁴ "Program Notes," Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, 27 April 2007.

⁶⁵ Persis Vehar, "Biography".

also coincided with the 175th anniversary of Buffalo's incorporation as a city in 1832.⁶⁶

Clarinet Works

Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano (1986)

Sound-Piece for Clarinet and Piano (1998)

Jukebox Dances for Clarinet and Piano (2004-07)

City of Light Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (2006)

⁶⁶ Jan Zezioro, "The Light Motif," *Art Voice* (Apr-May 2007), 31.

Sound-Piece for Clarinet and Piano

Sound-Piece was commissioned by clarinetist Dr. Crystal Reinoso, with joint funding from the Faculty-Student Association of Students in Music, the Performing Arts Department at Buffalo State College, the Women's Interdisciplinary Unit, and the Buffalo State College Foundation. Dr. Reinoso and Ms. Vehar premiered the work on March 6, 1997 in Rockwell Hall at Buffalo State College. The performance was a part of the university's Showcase of Women in the Arts.

The first movement musically paints "the uncertainty involved in asking the essential questions of the universe."⁶⁷ "The trills, tremolos, unresolved, augmented harmonies, tone clusters, and multi-phonics musically express the nebulousness and complexity of this search."⁶⁸ "Inner Space," the second movement, is written in a three-part form, the first and last of which have extended techniques, glissandi, and multi-meter passages to represent random and chaotic thoughts. The inner lyrical section flows in metered time to give a sense of harmony and inspired, creative, and clear thoughts. Being very conscious of tone color, the composer strived to create a more French-inspired lyrical sound in the middle passage.⁶⁹ The last movement, "Earth-Bound," has pounding, driving rhythms and brutal slashes of sounds depicting the manic day-to day of human activities on Earth. Vehar intended for the clarinet to have an American tone quality, edgy and aggressive. Jazz-like passages give respite from the cacophony. She equates those passages to "human temptations in life."⁷⁰

Jenni Shaffer Brandon (b.1977)

Biography

Jenni Shaffer Brandon was born on May 6, 1977 in Hershey, Pennsylvania. She received a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from West Chester University in Pennsylvania, and a Master of Music degree in composition from the University of Texas at Austin. Her principal teachers were Robert Maggio, Larry Nelson, Dan Welcher, Kevin Puts, Rick Lesemann, and Morten Lauridsen. A resident of Long Beach, California, Ms. Brandon is accomplished as a composer, conductor, and vocalist. She has been awarded several commissions, awards, and grants, including awards from Voices of Change Russell Horn Composer's Competition, the National Federation of Music Clubs, The National Creative and Inventive Thinking Skills Association, and a Subito grant from the Los Angeles Composers Forum.⁷¹

⁶⁷Persis Vehar, *Sound-Piece*, Program Notes, Premiere, 6 March 1997.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹Persis Vehar, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 19 February 2008.

⁷⁰*Sound-Piece*, Program Notes.

⁷¹Jenni Brandon, "Homepage," <<http://www.jennibrandon.com>> (accessed 10 October 2007).

Ms. Brandon's body of compositions is mainly for solo voice, voice and piano, and vocal ensemble. Her work for solo voice and piano, "Imperceptible", after a moving performance at a concert in 2006 for the Los Angeles chapter of the National Association of Composers USA (NACUSA), was described as "sensual and sensitive... haunting."⁷² Her composition, *The Wildflower Trio*, for oboe, bassoon, and piano, was commissioned in 2004 by The College of Fine Arts of the University of Texas at Austin to honor the life and work of Lady Bird Johnson. The work was recorded with Lucy Baines Johnson reading poetry that inspired the piece.⁷³ Recordings will be specially sold, starting in 2008, at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Austin, an organization founded by the former First Lady and actress Helen Hayes.⁷⁴ Ms. Brandon also received a commission in 2007 for *Vive la Liberté*, a work for children's chorus, flute, percussion, and piano. The composition celebrates the life of the Marquis de Lafayette and was performed in commemoration of his 250th birthday in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Ms. Brandon is currently the music director of The Concert Singers, a community choral ensemble based in Westchester, California. Under her direction, the group has received an invitation to perform at the Rotary International conference in Los Angeles in June 2008. She has also served as the music director for a variety of children's theatre, and is active in writing original songs for new plays for adults and children for the Santa Monica-based production, The Virginia Avenue Project.

As a vocalist she has sung under the baton of several well-known conductors including John Alexander, Keith Lockhart, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Carl St. Clair, John Williams, John Mauceri, and William Dehning. Jenni has performed in concert with the Boston Pops, Pacific Chorale, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, and at the Hollywood Bowl.⁷⁵

Chansons de la Nature pour la Clarinette

Les Oiseaux (The Birds)

Le Poisson (The Fish)

Le Papillon (The Butterfly)

Le Lapin et La Tortue (The Hare and The Tortoise)

L' étoile (The Star)

Dancez! (Dance!)

Le Serpent (The Snake)

Chansons de la Nature pour la Clarinette was composed in 2003, and premiered on March 6, 2004 at the Society of Composers National Conference at the University of Oklahoma. Ms. Brandon chose the French titles and subject matters for the seven short movements, drawing inspiration from images from Aesop's fables, as well as those

⁷²Jeannie Pool, "Art Song: Alive And Well In Los Angeles" IAWM Journal 12, no. 2 (2006) 45-46.

⁷³Jenni Brandon, "Homepage."

⁷⁴"About Us," *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*, <<http://www.wildflower.org/about/>> (accessed 18 February 2008).

⁷⁵Jenni Brandon, "Homepage."

represented by Jean de la Fontaine. The lyrical meter of the French language highly influenced her, and she chose the voice-like quality of the clarinet to paint the image of each movement. Most notable are the movements “Le lapin et La Tortue” (The Hare and the Tortoise) and “Le Serpent” (The Snake).⁷⁶ In a review of its premiere, Guy Vollen described, “The loping alternation between ‘La tortue et le lapin’ (the tortoise and the hare) was instantly audible, and Brandon’s ‘Serpent’ was more an elusive prankster than a sinuous tempter.”⁷⁷

Margaret Brouwer (b. 1940)

Biography

Margaret Brouwer was born in 1940 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College-Conservatory, a Master of Music degree from Michigan State University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Indiana University. Among her composition teachers are Donald Erb, Harvey Solberger, Frederick Fox, and George Crumb. She has had residencies at the Wellesley Composers Conference, MacDowell Colony, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and the Charles Ives Center for American Music.⁷⁸

Brouwer is head of the composition department and holder of the Vincent K. and Edith H. Smith Chair in Composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Ford Foundation, Knight Foundation, Meet the Composer, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Indiana Arts Commission. Brouwer received an award from the Academy of Arts and Letters in 2006, and was named a Guggenheim Fellow in 2004 for her “unusually impressive achievement in the past and exceptional promise for future accomplishment.”⁷⁹

Ms. Brouwer has received critical acclaim for two of her recordings: the 2003 CD, *Light*, released by New World Records and the 2006 Naxos release, *Aurolescent Circles*. Her orchestral work, *Aurolescent Circles*, was recorded with solo percussionist virtuoso Evelyn Glennie and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Gerard Schwarz. She was praised by Lawson Taitte of The Dallas Morning News as having “one of the most delicate ears and inventive imaginations among contemporary American composers...Ms. Brouwer not only gets seductive sounds out of the instruments, she also creates a dramatic line that keeps the attention riveted.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶Jenni Brandon, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 13 February 2008.

⁷⁷ Guy Vollen, “SCI Conference Blog,” *Society of Composers, Inc.*,

<http://societyofcomposers.org/data/conferences/archives/2003_2004conferences/national_2003_2004/2004national.blog/conferenceblog.html> (accessed 20 February 2008).

⁷⁸Margaret Brouwer, “Composition Department,” *Cleveland Institute of Music*, <<http://www.cim.edu/coIfaculty.php?div=11>> (accessed 20 January 2007).

⁷⁹Margaret Brouwer, “Homepage,” <<http://www.brouwermusic.com>> (accessed 5 November 2006).

⁸⁰ Brouwer, Homepage (10 Jan 2008).

Many of the country's most distinguished ensembles have programmed her works, including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Cassatt and Cavani String Quartets, and the Seattle Symphony. In Washington, D.C., her music has been performed before audiences at the Kennedy Center, the Corcoran Gallery, and the Philips Collection.⁸¹

Clarinet Works

Margaret Brouwer has written solo and chamber works for clarinet:

Chamber Concerto for Solo Clarinet, Percussion, and Piano (1993)

Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (1994) –revised version of *Chamber Concerto*

"No Rotary Phone" for Solo Clarinet (1995)- adapted from flute *solo*, *Diary of an Alien*

Prelude and Vivace for Solo Clarinet and Chamber Orchestra (1996)- chamber version of

Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra

Lament for Violin, Clarinet, Bassoon (Cello), and Percussion (2002)

Quintet for Clarinet in A and String Quartet (2005)

Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano (2005)

Chamber Concerto

Chamber Concerto was composed in 1993, and premiered on February 6, 1994 at the Women Composers Orchestra Concert in Baltimore, Maryland. Daniel Silver, then Principal Clarinetist of the Baltimore Opera Orchestra was the soloist. Brouwer describes the clarinet in the first movement, "Prelude," as floating above, below, and around the sparkling sounds of the piano and percussion in an almost dreamy sense. Peace and tranquility are key moods. This is interrupted in the second movement, "Vivace Ritmico," with raucous sounds of the percussion and comical, jovial, and tongue-in-cheek lines in the clarinet. Jazz –like passages can be heard passed around the three instruments.⁸²

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Biography

Elizabeth Brown Larsen was born on December 24, 1950 in Wilmington, Delaware. She holds multiple degrees from the University of Minnesota, including a Ph.D. in Music Composition that she earned in 1978. Among her principal teachers are Dominick Argento, Paul Fetler, and Eric Stokes.⁸³ Larsen co-founded with composer Stephen Paulus the Minnesota Composers Forum in 1973. This organization, expanding nationally as the American Composers Forum, provides assistance to aspiring composers through offering

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Margaret Brouwer, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 14 February 2008.

⁸³ Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel, eds. *The Norton Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (New York: The McMillan Press Limited, 1995), 266-67.

fellowships, producing concerts, and advising in business matters.⁸⁴ In 1983, she became the first woman to hold the position of Composer-in Residence with a major orchestra. She held this position with the Minnesota Orchestra for four years, and has had similar residencies with the Colorado Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Cincinnati Conservatory, and the Philadelphia School of the Arts. Larsen has been an advisor to the American Symphony Orchestra League Board, American Society of Composers, ASCAP, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Since the mid-1980s, she has composed strictly by commissions.⁸⁵

Among her accolades is the 1994 Grammy Award for the compact disc, *The Art of Arleen Auger*, in which her song cycle *Sonnets from the Portuguese* was featured. Larsen has received fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Opera Institute, and was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from The American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2000. A strong advocate for education, Larsen held the 2003-2004 Harissios Papamarkou Chair of Education and Technology at the John W. Kluge Foundation of the Library of Congress. She was also a recipient of the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁸⁶

Libby Larsen is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers today. From her catalogue of over 200 compositions, she has contributed to the orchestral, choral, opera, theatre, dance, chamber, and solo repertoires. Her style of composition is an amalgamation of two aspects, her classical training and the influences from American culture. Larsen points out that her highly rhythmic style of writing comes from the various styles of music she was exposed to as a child listening to her mother's record collection. She soaked in the sounds of big band, boogie, and ragtime, as well as delta and Chicago blues.⁸⁷ She is also fascinated with the inflections and rhythms in the language of American culture, notably slang. During her interview with the Verdehr Trio's violinist Walter Verdehr in 2006 for *Making of a Medium, Volume 2*, Larsen said, "Rhythm and melody really come does come from language...American language is a rather new language...post-World War II... from coast to coast."⁸⁸ She is interested in its rhythm, body language, and narrow pitch band. Larsen strives to bring together her formal training and cultural influences to create sounds that capture the essence of the American spirit.⁸⁹

Clarinet Works

Larsen is one of the most prolific American-born women composers of clarinet music, having written eleven works for clarinet:

⁸⁴ Neil Butterworth, *Dictionary of American Classical Composers*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 266-67.

⁸⁵ Bums, Kristine H., ed., *Women and Music in America Since 1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 365-66.

⁸⁶ Libby Larsen, "Homepage," <<http://www.libbylarsen.com>> (accessed 5 November 2006).

⁸⁷ Libby Larsen, interview by phone, Annapolis, MD, 18 April 2005.

⁸⁸ Libby Larsen, interview by Walter Verdehr, *The Verdehr Trio: Making of a Medium Video Series, Part II*, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State Libraries, 2006. Digital Video Disc.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Three Pieces/or Treble Wind and Guitar (1974)
Corker for clarinet and percussion (1977)
Song Without Words for clarinet and piano (1986)
Black Birds, Red Hills for clarinet, viola, piano, optional slides (1987), revised 1996
Dancing Solo for solo clarinet (1994)
Slang for Clarinet in Bb, Violin, and Piano (1993-4)
Blue Third Pieces for flute or clarinet and guitar (1996)
Bally Deux for 2 clarinets and string quartet (2001)
Barn Dances for flute, clarinet, and piano (2001)
Licorice Stick for clarinet and piano (2002)
Yellow Jersey for 2 clarinets (2004).

Licorice Licks

Licorice Licks was written for clarinetist Stefan Harg in 2002. Harg is a frequent performer at the International Clarinet Association's ClarFest, and was Artistic Director and host of the event in Stockholm, Sweden in 2002. He performed Larsen's one-movement work at the 2002 ICA ClarFest with pianist Katherine Strom-Harg. The piece embodies distinctly American sounds of Benny Goodman and George Gershwin, with and jazz-like riffs and *Rhapsody In Blue*-esque glissandi. Larsen's intention to create these sounds is also clear in the piano's left-handed boogie riffs and pounding rhythmic chords that symbolize boogie style drumming.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Stefan Harg, "An Interview with Libby Larsen," *The Clarinet*, 30 (June 30 2003) 58-61.